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Letter dated 17 January 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to draw your attention to the latest attack perpetrated by the terrorist organization Hizbullah.

On the afternoon of 15 January, Hizbullah terrorists fired anti-aircraft shells at Israeli aircraft that were flying in Israeli airspace. Though the shells missed their intended targets in the sky, pieces of shrapnel fell on the northern Israeli city of Kiryat Shmona, forcing residents to flee underground into bomb shelters.

This is not the first time that Hizbullah has launched cross-border assaults into Israel. Residents of Kiryat Shmona and other northern communities have suffered for years from indiscriminate attacks by Hizbullah, particularly the firing of Katyusha rockets at population centres. This tactic has claimed the lives of many Israeli civilians and wounded scores of others over the years, while terrorizing communities in the area by forcing residents to spend lengthy periods of time in bomb shelters.

I have detailed a number of other major Hizbullah attacks in my letters dated 6 July 2001 (A/56/161-S/2001/673), 16 April 2001 (S/2001/367), 16 February 2001 (A/55/792-S/2001/142), 6 February 2001 (A/55/767-S/2001/111), 26 November 2000 (S/2000/1121), 23 October 2000 (S/2000/1011), 19 October 2000 (S/2000/1002) and 7 October 2000 (S/2000/969). Among these are the abduction and murder of three Israeli soldiers on 7 October 2000 and the abduction of an Israeli civilian, Elhanan Tenenboim, several days later.

Hizbullah's terrorist operations against Israel, and the failure of the Government of Lebanon to prevent Hizbullah from launching attacks against Israel from its territory, constitute a flagrant disregard for the Blue Line as determined by the United Nations and violate fundamental norms of international law, most recently reaffirmed by Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), which obligates all States to prevent their territory from serving as a base for terrorist operations. These attacks further violate the provisions of Security Council resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 1310 (2000), 1337 (2001) and 1365 (2001), which call for the restoration of international peace and security, the return of the effective authority

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and presence of the Government of Lebanon in the south and respect for the integrity of the Blue Line as determined by the Secretary-General and endorsed by the Security Council. The Secretary-General has noted, in his report of 22 January 2001 (S/2001/66), that Hizbullah's attacks in the Shab'a farms area were "deliberate acts in breach of the decisions of the Security Council".

The resolutions of the Security Council and established principles of international law clearly refute any contention that the use of armed force against Israel across the Blue Line is a legitimate act that can serve as a substitute for the duty, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, to resolve disputes by peaceful means. Indeed, the repeated claims of legitimacy put forward by Hizbullah and its supporters for acts of terror flout the will of the international community, which is uniting to fight terrorism wherever it may breed.

As is well known, Hizbullah is based in southern Lebanon, but it maintains cells and a logistical and financial support network with a presence on several continents. It has the backing of several Governments renowned for their support of terrorism, most notably the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic, and receives funds from clandestine institutions in various parts of the globe. In the nearly two decades since its founding, the organization has been responsible for numerous high-profile acts of terrorism, both in the Middle East and beyond, including the bombing of the Multinational Force headquarters in Beirut in 1983 that claimed the lives of 240 U.S. Marines and 58 French soldiers and the hijacking of a TWA jetliner in June 1985. Hizbullah is also responsible for two attacks in Buenos Aires — the bombings of the Embassy of Israel (1992) and the AMIA Jewish Community Centre in Buenos Aires (1994) — which killed a total of 114 civilians and injured hundreds more.

Hizbullah is also actively involved in Palestinian terrorism, providing training, financial support and other assistance to Palestinian terrorist groups operating against Israeli civilians, most notably Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Terrorists from these groups routinely receive training at Hizbullah's bases in Lebanon, as well as logistical and financial assistance. Most recently, Hizbullah was shown to be involved in the attempt to smuggle sophisticated weaponry to the Palestinian Authority aboard the *Karine A*, an incident that I referred to in my letter dated 4 January 2002 (A/56/766-S/2002/25). The 50 tons of weapons and ammunition aboard the *Karine A*, which were intercepted by Israeli forces before they could reach their destination, would have substantially upgraded the capability of Palestinian terrorists to threaten civilian lives.

Like the Palestinian terrorist groups that it supports, as well as those countries that lend it political and financial support, Hizbullah is committed to the destruction of the State of Israel. Statements by Hizbullah's leaders calling for the destruction of Israel belie any claims that Hizbullah's activities are aimed solely at driving Israel from the Shab'a farms region, acts which themselves have been declared illegitimate by the Secretary-General. In a speech delivered in Tehran on 24 April 2001, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, Hizbullah's Secretary-General, said the following:

> "We are living in a very sensitive and crucial period, which demands the need to adopt the choice of resistance. From the historic victory in Lebanon to the failure of the negotiations and the emergence of the intifada, our nation has now a historic opportunity to wipe out the cancerous Israeli project which has been threatening our region for 50 years ... The fully armed Zionist military

should await surprise attacks from Palestinians. I say to the Zionists — and I mean it —wait for us, we will come to you from everywhere."

On 14 December 2001, Nasrallah made an even more explicit threat against Israeli civilians:

"On this final Friday of the month of Ramadan I say to you: Don't listen to those who tell you it is forbidden to carry out suicide attacks. Don't listen to those who talk about 'civilians and soldiers' in Israel ... I am saying to you with all the legitimate responsibility, the moral and 'Jihad-like', that there are no civilians [in it]. They are all occupiers, all of them are stealers of land, all of them are partners in the crime and in the massacre. Therefore we must continue in this way without any doubt or illusion."

For nearly two decades, Hizbullah has adopted the language and the tactics of a terrorist organization, deliberately targeting innocent civilians to further its goals.

Hizbullah's lengthy and detailed record of bombings, murders, abductions and other terrorist acts against civilians, and the repeated declarations of its leaders and terrorist masterminds that its acts of terrorism will continue, palpably demonstrates that Hizbullah is a terrorist group that poses a grave threat to innocent civilians and whose terrorist infrastructure must be dismantled in the context of the international community's campaign against terrorism. In this respect, we are encouraged that Imad Mughniyeh, a senior Hizbullah officer responsible for scores of attacks, hijackings and bombings over the years, has been listed as one of the world's most wanted terrorists, and that groups to which Hizbullah has provided support and assistance have been designated as terrorist organizations.

It is critical that the international community conduct its campaign against terrorism in a consistent, fearless and unwavering manner. It makes little sense to brand an organization's leaders as terrorists and designate other groups that the organization trains as terrorists while failing to apply that same designation to the organization itself. Such a failure would legitimize the continuation of operations by Hizbullah and solidify the refusal of its supporting Governments to comply with the anti-terror resolutions of the Security Council, thereby severely undermining international efforts against terrorism. The success of our efforts to rid the world of the scourge of terrorism requires that standards be applied uniformly such that every potential terrorist understands that the international community will not tolerate any act of terrorism, regardless of cause or grievance.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 166, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yehuda **Lancry**
Permanent Representative